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## JAPAN AND THE PRESENT CRISIS

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Is Japan sincere in her present alliance? The question reveals a wide-spread feeling of uncertainty as to the real mind of an oriental people united with the growing democracy of the West in a great struggle for liberty and fraternity among the nations of the earth. This feeling of uncertainty is perfectly natural. It arises from certain indisputable facts; but its growth has been fostered by insidious propaganda, perverting those facts and ignoring others, until its existence to-day is fraught with serious danger to the United States and to the cause of international justice.

When Japan awoke at the beginning of the Meiji Era and found herself confronted with the problem of living in a modern world, she wisely set about securing for herself the ablest teachers. These she sought in every nation; but for military training she went to Germany; and following the example of the world, to Germany she also went for higher education, sending thither, during half a century, her picked men from every department of university study to complete their preparation to be leaders in her new life. As a result, Japan came to admire Germany and the German people, their efficiency and Kultur; and Prussian influence became dominant not only in the Japanese army but also in those manifold spheres of activity controlled by her men of university training.

In 1890, under the pressure of evolving national life, Japan was granted a constitution; but, in spite of the efforts of the last twenty-five years to realize the ideal of that constitution, she is still largely bureaucratic.

Furthermore, in her administration of Taiwan, her acquisition of Chosen, and her pressure upon China, there has not been lacking evidence of selfish territorial greed. These facts: Japan's admiration for Germany, her Prussianism, her bureaucracy and her territorial greed, form a foundation four-square for a superstructure of surmise to the effect that Japan will, upon the slightest opportunity, unite herself with Germany or at least develop along Prussian lines in the East, thus becoming inevitably an enemy of the United States whose ideals of democracy and state-brotherhood are clearly defined.

All these facts were known to Germany; and she was not slow to create therefrom an atmosphere of suspicion against Japan throughout the world, especially in the United States whom she hoped to involve in an Oriental war. Japan's alliance against Germany indeed seemed incongruous, especially when it was remembered that, at the outbreak of the war, she had not the slightest personal cause for hostility. Nothing but her loyalty to an alliance with England, nothing but her respect for a *piece of paper*, led her to enter the war; and nothing but that same loyalty held her there during the early years of the struggle.

If the United States of America had to wait, and wait, and wait for a very material personal injury before she could see her duty in the great conflict, it is not strange that she fell an easy victim to German plots and harbored marked suspicion of Japan and her motives. Recent revelations of German intrigue and treachery have removed from thinking minds the cruder forms of that suspicion; but the natural uncertainty remains, and we still need to remember that he who in word or thought deepens our doubt of Japan or weakens our union with her, is, though perhaps unknowingly, a tool of Prussian intrigue.

In this propaganda, based upon the facts already mentioned, certain other facts have been intentionally ignored. They have been over-looked also by those of us who should have known better. *Noblesse oblige*—the sense of what is demanded by personal honor—is of compelling strength in Japan. Whatever slurs may be cast upon the business

integrity of Japanese merchants, whatever charge of secret diplomacy may be brought against her statesmen, Japan is, above every other nation, susceptible to the influence of expectation, and would deem it an eternal disgrace to be found untrustworthy in a matter of trust. No country, not excepting the United States, holds a higher record than is evidenced in the scrupulous care with which Japan has kept her Gentlemen's Agreement with the United States, even under the smart of racial discrimination. Our government knows and our people should understand that Japan may safely be trusted in all matters where honor is called into play. If she seems in any case to have failed, it is because of what she had been led to believe the rules of the game.

In the second place, a unique feature of Japanese statesmanship is the marked ability to foresee the inevitable, and a sure instinct to reserve for itself the right of initiative in leading the nation along that inevitable path. For example, Japan boasts herself to be the only nation possessing a constitution not forced but freely given by a gracious sovereign. It is true that her constitution is the free gift of the Emperor; but it is also true that for twenty years the demand for such a constitution had been growing throughout the nation until the government foresaw the inevitable, declared that a constitution would be granted at the end of ten years, and kept its promise in 1890 amid the rejoicings of an absolutely united people. Although Japan's constitutionalism was in 1890 merely an ideal upon paper, although the realization of that ideal has been slow and not unattended by reverses, yet the quarter of a century has seen real progress; and Japan today, in spite of her lingering bureaucracy, is in the process of true democratization.

Here a third fact must be emphasized: in Japan the highest morality, supreme duty, demands of the individual and the class complete self-abnegation for the good of the state. Her concept of the state is not Prussian; it is distinctively Japanese. It contemplates not a ruler, nor yet a ruling class, but a family, a racial brotherhood, under an Imperial Father. For the good of this brotherhood, the

law of self-abnegation applies not to the individual alone but to each and every class; and repeatedly in history individuals and classes have bowed in willing obedience to that supreme duty, as when after the Restoration the wealthy and powerful Samurai surrendered all—wealth and power—to the throne that their country might be strongly united in her new endeavor.

What is Japan's situation today? She finds herself a party to a great democratic alliance struggling for international justice and brotherhood. Her high sense of honor, of noblesse oblige, holds her to that alliance in which she has contributed far more than we realize, or can realize, until we awake to a deeper appreciation of what Great Britain and her Allies have accomplished in their guardianship of the high seas. United in this alliance, Japan is caught in the folds of an accelerated evolution. Her leaders to day foresee the inevitable assured in an allied victory: the democratization of the world. At heart some are deeply troubled; others rejoice; but the veriest bureaucrat in all Japan will, figuratively speaking, commit harakira before he will stand in the way of his country's progress; nay more, he will lead his country on that path of progress though it mean the downfall of every personal ambition.

I do not idealize the leaders of Japan, nor do I say that they all rejoice at the vision of the future which they behold; but I do say with full confidence, based upon the psychology of their race, that what they have done they will do: sacrifice all that their country may not lose the fruit of victory—a place in the fellowship of the forward-moving nations of the world.

Our eyes are upon Europe, and we watch with eager gaze the brightening promise of victory for justice and humanity, for democracy among the nations there; but the results of the war in Europe will be insignificant in comparison with its results in Asia. The outcome of this struggle changes by two thousand years the course of Oriental evolution. Yes, if Germany were victorious it would mean Prussianism in Japan and throughout the East, even as it would mean by necessity the exaltation of force, in the

United States of America. But Germany is not victorious. Her efficiency and Kultur, idolized by all, have been found wanting. There is a surer road to a place in the Sun; and none but a fool will follow her now in the pathway that leads to death.

The Japanese by nature and instinct are idealists and hero-worshippers. Only through the necessity and training of the last fifty years have they become materialistic and worshippers of efficiency. When Europe and Great Britain went to war with Germany, it seemed to Japan largely a struggle for material advantage. When the United States held to neutrality and harvested enormous wealth, that also seemed good economic policy. When the United States at last entered the war it was only after having suffered material loss, and her policy still seemed consistent. But when the people of the United States carried successive Liberty Loans over the top, when they gave their millions in an increasing stream to the Red Cross and for the work of the Y. M. C. A., Japan looked on in wonder. Here was something other than that selfish materialism which she had come to feel characterized the United States in its worship of the almighty dollar. She wondered and questioned: can it really be that the United States is in the war from disinterested, humanitarian motives! She began to realize the meaning of the war.

When Japan is fully confident of America's sincerity, when the war shall have ceased, in victory for the principles of justice and humanity, Japan, touched by the exhibit of practical idealism will be ready to follow America through thick and thin, in a devotion to what is also her own native instinct. Somewhat over two decades ago, before clouds of suspicion had begun to prejudice Japan against the United States, in one of her larger cities the children of the primary schools, in which no white men taught, were asked to state in writing what character in history they most admired and most desired to emulate. In the thousands of answers appeared the names of ancient Japanese heroes and of Chinese sages, but the name of Abraham Lincoln led all the rest.

The duty of the United States is clear today. We no longer believe the crude stories of Japanese treachery upon our shores. We must forever banish from our minds the suspicion that militates against the most cordial coöperation and makes it difficult for Japan to move freely in the current of her new evolution. More than that, in the councils that conclude the war we must seek such an alliance with Japan as will make future misunderstandings impossible and cause her to feel the constant inspiration of a trusted, trusting friend in the working out of her hard problem of oriental democracy.